

THE PRESIDENCY

The Festival Guest

Here Beat His Breast

*I was a fire-breathing Catholic C.O.,
and made my manic statement,
telling off the state and president,
and then*

*sat waiting sentence in the bull pen
beside a Negro boy with curlicues
of marijuana in his hair.*

—*Memories of West Street and Lepke,*
by Robert Lowell

During World War II, Boston-born Robert Lowell was a C.O.—a conscientious objector. Refusing to be drafted into the Army, he served six months in a federal prison. Since that time, the great-grandnephew of Poet James Russell Lowell has gone on to write several volumes of widely praised, often autobiographical poetry, including *Lord Weary's Castle* and his latest, *For the Union Dead*.

Lowell, now 48, was among a score or so of writers invited by President Johnson to participate in a White House arts festival on June 14. He accepted the invitation, but then had second thoughts about it. Last week he caused a mild commotion by declining in public.

Nuclear Ruin. "I am afraid," he wrote to the President, "I accepted somewhat rapidly and greedily. I thought of such an occasion as a purely artistic flourish, even though every serious artist knows that he cannot enjoy public celebration without making subtle public commitments."

"But, after a week's wondering, I am conscience-bound to refuse your courteous invitation . . . Although I am very enthusiastic about most of your domestic legislation and intentions, I nevertheless can only follow our present foreign policy with the greatest dismay and distrust. We are in danger of imperceptibly becoming an explosive and suddenly chauvinistic nation, and we may even be

STEVE SCHAPIRO



POET LOWELL

Somewhat rapidly and greedily.

drifting on our way to the last nuclear ruin.

"I know it is hard for the responsible man to act; it is also painful for the private and irresolute man to dare criticism. At this anguished, delicate and perhaps determining moment, I feel I am serving you and our country best by not taking part in the White House Festival of the Arts."

Twenty residents of the nation's intellectual community promptly rushed forth in public support of Lowell. Among them were Novelists Mary McCarthy, Philip Roth and Bernard Malamud; Critics Alfred Kazin and Dwight Macdonald; Poets John Berryman, W. D. Snodgrass and Alan Dugan. None of them had been invited to the White House, but that didn't make any difference.

Honor & Respect. Two authors who had been invited, John Hersey and Saul Bellow, publicly agreed with the criticism of Johnson's foreign policies but said they would attend the festival.

Said Bellow: "The President intends in his own way to encourage American artists. I consider this event to be an official function, not a political occasion . . . Therefore I do not think it necessary to acquaint him with my position on Viet Nam or to send him a statement declaring that I am wholly opposed to the presence of marines in Santo Domingo . . . Mr. Johnson is not simply this country's principal policymaker. He is an institution. When he invites me to Washington, I accept in order to show my respect for his intentions and to honor his high office. I am sure that he does not expect me to accept every policy and action of his Administration together with the invitation."

Trying to be Both

President Johnson returned from a long holiday weekend in Texas to speak at Daughter Luci's graduation from the National Cathedral School. To the girls of the graduating class he confided some of the problems of the presidency, recalling Henry Clay's declaration that he would rather be right than President. "I must try to be both," said Johnson. "And as President of your country I must act, in this 20th century, often swiftly, always decisively, according to judgment." Returning to his seat, the President stopped, hesitated, then walked over to the white-robed girls to kiss Luci.

While Lady Bird vacationed in a Virgin Islands retreat, the President took Luci with him to a good old-fashioned Democratic fund-raising dinner in Mayor Dick Daley's Chicago. It was the sort of occasion that would ordinarily bring out the rousing Republican bairner in L.B.J. But not this time. Instead, he used it to issue an appeal to the Russian people for friendship, and to declare himself firmly against appeasement. Recalling the lesson of Munich, he said: "In the 1930s we made our fate not by what we did but by what we failed to do. We propelled ourselves—and all mankind—toward tragedy,



LYNDON & LUCI AT GRADUATION EXERCISES

Often swiftly, always decisively.

not by action but by inaction. The failure of free men was not of the sword but of the soul—and there must be no such failure in the 1960s."

Back in Washington, Johnson turned away from foreign affairs, which had dominated every utterance during the week. To the graduating class of mostly Negro Howard University, the President pointed out that even though Negroes are winning the legal battle for equality, Negro poverty remains worse than white poverty. He talked about the psychological scars left on young Negroes, the devastating breakdown in Negro family life, the lack of education. He cited figures to show that the gulf between whites and Negroes is actually widening rather than closing, despite the legal breakthrough.

Johnson announced that as the first step in erasing the gulf he would call a White House conference of scholars, Negro leaders and Government officials; their mission may be to find ways of fulfilling economic, educational and social rights. This mission, he said, is "the glorious opportunity of this generation to end the one huge wrong of the American nation—and in so doing to find America for ourselves with the same immense thrill of discovery which gripped those who first began to realize that here, at last, was a home for freedom."

After the speech, someone praised Johnson for his delivery. The President looked the man in the eye and said simply: "I really meant it."

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Neglected Fences

Preoccupied with crisis diplomacy in Viet Nam and the Dominican Republic, President Johnson has had little time to think of the rest of the world—including Western Europe, the area of most vital concern to the U.S. Yet no one could doubt that the U.S.'s fences in Europe needed mending, or, at the very least, tending.

In London last week, a high-ranking

British official chided the U.S. for what he called its "sophisticated insouciance" in dealing with Europe. In Bonn, a West German government official said: "The U.S. has a role in Europe. When the time comes again, we hope you will have solved ~~your~~ other problems and can play it." British Liberal Party Leader Jo Grimond recently rose in Parliament to criticize President Johnson for not being "deeply interested in Europe." In Paris, a poll taken by the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique to determine the world figure whom Frenchmen regard as the greatest menace to world peace, Lyndon Johnson ran a close second (30% to 32%) to Red China's Mao Tse-tung.

Living Reminder. In the U.S. last week for a five-day visit was a living reminder of America's stake in Europe: West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard. Erhard did not come to complain. But in stating the reason for his trip, he did note that "urgent decisions that are vital for the future of the Atlantic Alliance need to be discussed."

At New York's Columbia University, Erhard received an honorary doctor of laws degree, along with six others. At a luncheon given by the German-American Chamber of Commerce and attended by 635 U.S. businessmen, Erhard spoke of deteriorating U.S.-French relations, and their effect on the Atlantic Alliance. West Germany's foreign policy, he said, depends on a strong Western Alliance that includes both France and the U.S. "There can be no European unity without France or without Germany," he declared. And "without the closest alliance with the U.S.," there can be no North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Next day in Washington, Erhard met with Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Under Secretary George Ball, later spent 90 minutes in a "working session" with the President. During their talk, which Erhard described as "filled with substance," the two leaders reaffirmed some old pledges of mutual support. They agreed to work for "further European economic integration" and "increasingly closer economic ties between Europe and America and the rest of the world"—a point that was not likely to please French President Charles de Gaulle. Beyond that, Erhard asked for—and got—reiteration of U.S. promises to continue to work toward German reunification, and to keep U.S. forces, "backed by nuclear power," in Europe for as long as they are "wanted and needed." For his part, Johnson won Erhard's strong and publicly stated support for "American determination to turn back aggression in Viet Nam."

Staunch Ally. If nothing else, Erhard's visit brought home again the fact that West Germany is a staunch U.S. ally—perhaps the staunchest in the present political pattern of Europe. It also served to underscore the point that U.S. interests in Europe are many and



ERHARD AT COLUMBIA

Not to complain, but to recall a vital concern.

vital, and that regardless of Viet Nam or the Dominican Republic or any other crisis in which he finds himself, President Johnson cannot afford to let those interests slide.

THE CONGRESS

When Luxuries Become Necessities

The House of Representatives might have been debating the merits of apple pie for all the opposition that was voiced. Before the House was President Johnson's proposed \$4.8 billion excise-tax cut, and House leaders had set aside five hours one day last week for pro and con on the bill. But there was so little con that the debate lasted barely three hours, after which the House passed the bill by a vote of 401 to 6.*

As whooshed through by the House, the bill would repeal "luxury" taxes in three stages over four years. The first reduction, amounting to \$1.7 billion and to become effective July 1, would repeal the 10% retail tax on jewelry, furs, cosmetics and other toiletries, luggage, handbags and other leather goods, as well as the 10% manufacturer's tax on business machines, sporting goods, phonograph records, musical instruments, television sets, radios and phonographs, refrigerators, freezers, electric, gas and oil appliances, pens and mechanical pencils, lighters, matches and playing cards. In addition, the 10% manufacturer's tax on new passenger cars would be cut to 7%, retroactive to May 15, with full repeal effective on Jan. 1, 1969. The 10% manufacturer's tax on air conditioners would be fully repealed, also retroactive to May 15.

A Hodgepodge of Taxes. The second stage, also amounting to \$1.7 billion, would come by Jan. 1, 1966 when the

10% tax on local and long-distance telephone and Teletype services would be reduced to 3%; the 8% to 20% taxes now charged on general admissions, race tracks, cabarets, club dues, electric light bulbs and parts and accessories for passenger cars would be repealed altogether.

The final reduction of about \$1.4 billion would occur gradually between Jan. 1, 1966 and Jan. 1, 1969, and would result in the repeal of the already reduced excise levies on cars and telephone and Teletype service.

As floor manager for the bill, Arkansas Democrat Wilbur Mills, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, explained that of the four types of excise taxes now in effect—user taxes (gasoline, airline tickets), regulatory (opium, betting, machine guns), sumptuary (alcohol, tobacco), and selective, or so-called luxury—only the luxury tax would be affected. Said he: "The excise taxes which this bill repeals were initially levied as emergency revenue-raising measures at the time of the Korean War, World War II, or at the time of the Depression of the 1930s. As a result, they represent a hodgepodge of taxes not developed on any systematic basis."

Almost Indistinguishable. Mills noted that "it sometimes is suggested that the present selective excise taxes are justified on the grounds that they are imposed on the sale of luxuries as contrasted with necessities. But in our society today it has become almost impossible to distinguish between luxuries and necessities."

Last week the Congress also:
 ▶ Approved, in the Senate, a bill authorizing \$5.2 billion for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration program in 1966, including \$242 million to carry forward the Gemini program and \$2.97 billion for the Apollo man-on-the-moon program. The bill now goes to a Senate-House conference

* The six: Republicans John F. Baldwin of California and Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, Democrats Charles S. Joelson of New Jersey, Paul C. Jones of Missouri, John O. Marsh Jr. and Howard W. Smith of Virginia.